via pacis

Newsletter of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

Volume 18, Number 4 Advent 1994

Resistance to StratCom Continues!

Feature Story — Pages 4 & 5

What's Happening

by Frank Cordaro

Welcome, dear reader, to this special Advent issue of *via pacis*. Each year at this time we come to you with an appeal for help in continuing the work of this community. Traditionally, it is during the Christmas season that we receive a good portion of the funds necessary to continue the Des Moines Catholic Worker's mission of hospitality and peace and justice work.

As Catholic Worker movement co-founders Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin taught us, Christ comes in the person of our guests.

On pages two and three of this *via pacis* we feature images of our guests, ourselves and members of the CW extended family. The miracle that is daily life at our hospitality houses is made possible through the generosity of our friends.

We need your gift of cash or food this holiday season. Please make checks out to the Des Moines Catholic Worker. Our address is: P.O. Box 4551, Des Moines, IA 50306. You may make arrangements to drop off donations by calling 515-243-0765. Thank you so much for your support.

I'm writing this "What's Happening" from "Club Fed" in Yankton, SD. I've taken up residency at the federal prison camp here to serve a six-month prison sentence for breaking my "ban-and-bar" letter from Offutt AFB last May. Brian Terrell, a fellow C.W.er from Maloy, IA and co-defendant, is serving a four-month sentence at the federal prison camp in Marion, IL. Brian and I, with the help of many folks and through the generosity of the people of St. Patrick's Church in Council Bluffs, are putting out a newsletter in which you can read all about our prison camp experiences. If you would like to be on the mailing list, contact the DMCW. Both Brian and I welcome personal letters:

Brian Terrell 06125-026
Box 1000 Marion, IL 62595
Letters of support for Brian's Family may be sent to: Betsy Keenan, Elijah and Clara at Box 264 - Maloy, IA 50852

Fr. Frank Cordaro 13093-047
Durand FPC Yankton
Box 700 Yankton, SD 57078

In other news, Norman Searah, Michael Sprong and I travelled to Boston for a conference on M. K. Gandhi. The conference was all we had hoped it would be. In addition, we got to rub shoulders with some of our heroes in the movement: Dan Berrigan, Ramsey Clark, Dave Dellinger and Helen Caldicott, plus touch base with old and new friends. It was great to be with my cousin Lewis Randa and the folks at the Life Experience School In Sherborn, MA. for the unveiling of the Gandhi statue, centerpiece of the Pacifist Memorial located on the grounds of the school.

Once again we see that it is virtually impossible to avoid the commercial hype and total take-over of the Advent season by the commercial and economic interests in this country. The commercial pre-Christmas season is just too important to our nation's economic well-being to let Advent's original intent and purpose take hold.

With the Christmas themes and symbols completely co-opted by the Lords of advertising, Advent's challenging and radical theme of waiting and being surprised never breaks the surface of our mainline commercial hype.

The practice of the Works of Mercy: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and giving shelter to the homeless is at the heart and soul of the Catholic Worker movement. These simple acts of charity are also the surest and quickest way to breaking open the mysteries of the Advent season that lead us to the birth of Christ.

A blessed Christmas to all of you and a happy new year!

Friday Night Mass at the Catholic Worker

*All masses are at 7:30 p.m. and are held at Dingman House, 1310 7th St. Everyone is welcome!

Dec. 23	with	Fr. Vincent Rosonke
Dec. 30	with	Fr. Ray Higgins
Jan. 6	with	Fr. Dave Fleming
Jan. 13	with	Fr. Dave Polich
Jan. 20	with	Fr. John Harmon
Jan. 27	with	Fr. Paul Bianchi
Feb. 3	with	Fr. Mike Amadeo
Feb. 10	with	Fr. Dan Siepker
Feb. 17	with	Fr. Tom Dooley
Feb. 24	with	Fr. Steve Orr
Mar. 3	with	Fr. Dave Fleming
Mar. 10	with	Fr. Dave Polich
Mar. 17	with	Fr. Don Bruck

Community News

by Joanne Kennedy

In the weeks since our last *vp* there have been many developments. First of all, our most crucial support person was imprisoned. Although Frank was two hours away in Council Bluffs he was a constant presence at the house and could always be counted on to help us out of a jam. He is sorely missed. To add insult to injury, as this issue arrives in your homes our Brethren Volunteer will be leaving us. Brett's tenure in the volunteer business in Des Moines has ended He will be heading home to Ohio for a spell and then on to other ventures.

Both of these losses have left us all thinking of different ways we can compensate. We are looking at the possibility of having folks cover a shift at the house so that Norman, Eddie, Carla and I can have a little time off. Presently, we all have a seven day work week and that can get exhausting.

Naturally, we would take the time to make a volunteer very comfortable with the tasks of a shift and would provide all the necessary information to make the process smooth and hopefully enjoyable. If any of you are interested and willing, please give me a call. I always do the afternoon shift at the house (2pm - 6pm) so you can reach me then.

Still, all is not dismal at the DMCW. Students from ISU, Grinnell and Graceland have come on work projects to help out and various groups continue to bring us meals. Eddie and Norman had the opportunity to go to the sweat lodge with Frank before he left, and I also got to attend the last supper extravaganza.

Carla has been extraordinarily busy, but she's proud as ever of her boys as they have all had excellent report cards from school this year. We're all proud of her for hanging in there. She now spends her late nights writing papers for class and doing laundry instead of this column.

Other developments include the slow process of mending Lazarus House. A special thanks to Kevin Cameron and Dave Fleming for "plugging us in". We have been blessed with an initial consultation with a contractor and are waiting for estimates so that we can be very clear about our needs. We have decided to take an "adopt a room" approach. The idea is for a group of people to choose a room in the house and see the project through to the end. There are seven rooms needing adoption and we are more than willing to give tours to anyone who wishes to select a room.

Of course, the same trials and tribulations of daily life that effect everyone wreck havoc on our lives as well. We have had a refrigerator and a deep freezer die on us in the last two months, heating bills are mounting and the cash flow situation is formidable. Another expense many of you may be unaware of is this newsletter. A close look at the back cover will reveal that we do not maintain non-profit status.

This is an important part of the Catholic Worker philosophy as we see it, but it does result in a rather steep postal bill Please do keep us in mind this holiday season, we appreciate every donation, no matter how insignificant it may seem to you and thank you for all your support and prayers.

Norman's Whereabouts

by Norman Searah

Some time ago I spent time in Storm Lake, Iowa, talking to students at St. Mary's College. I talked about the Catholic Worker, my experiences here and the fact that when I first came here there were seven Catholic Workers in Iowa and now there are only four. I also talked about my younger years as a runaway, in the late sixties and early seventies. Let me give you and idea of how it was for me living on the street back then.

If I had some money I would go to New York by bus. First off I would buy my ticket back home. Then, if it was daytime, I would go and find a place where I could be alone to think and pray because I often found myself alone and scared. If I was lucky and still had some money I would buy food from a store, otherwise I would try to eat at the missions.

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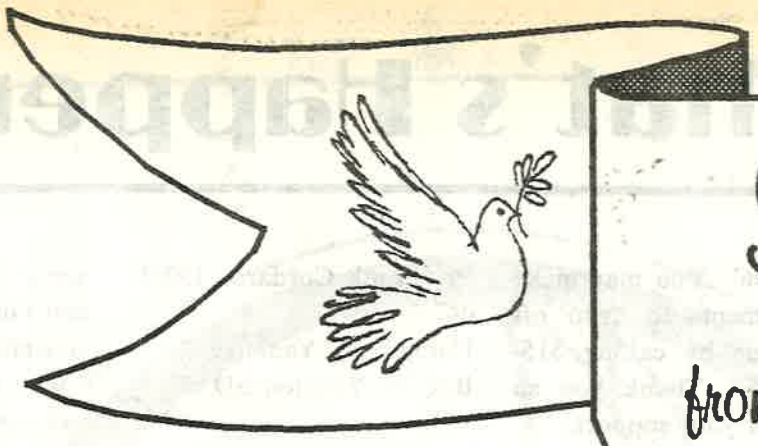
Carla — in the element



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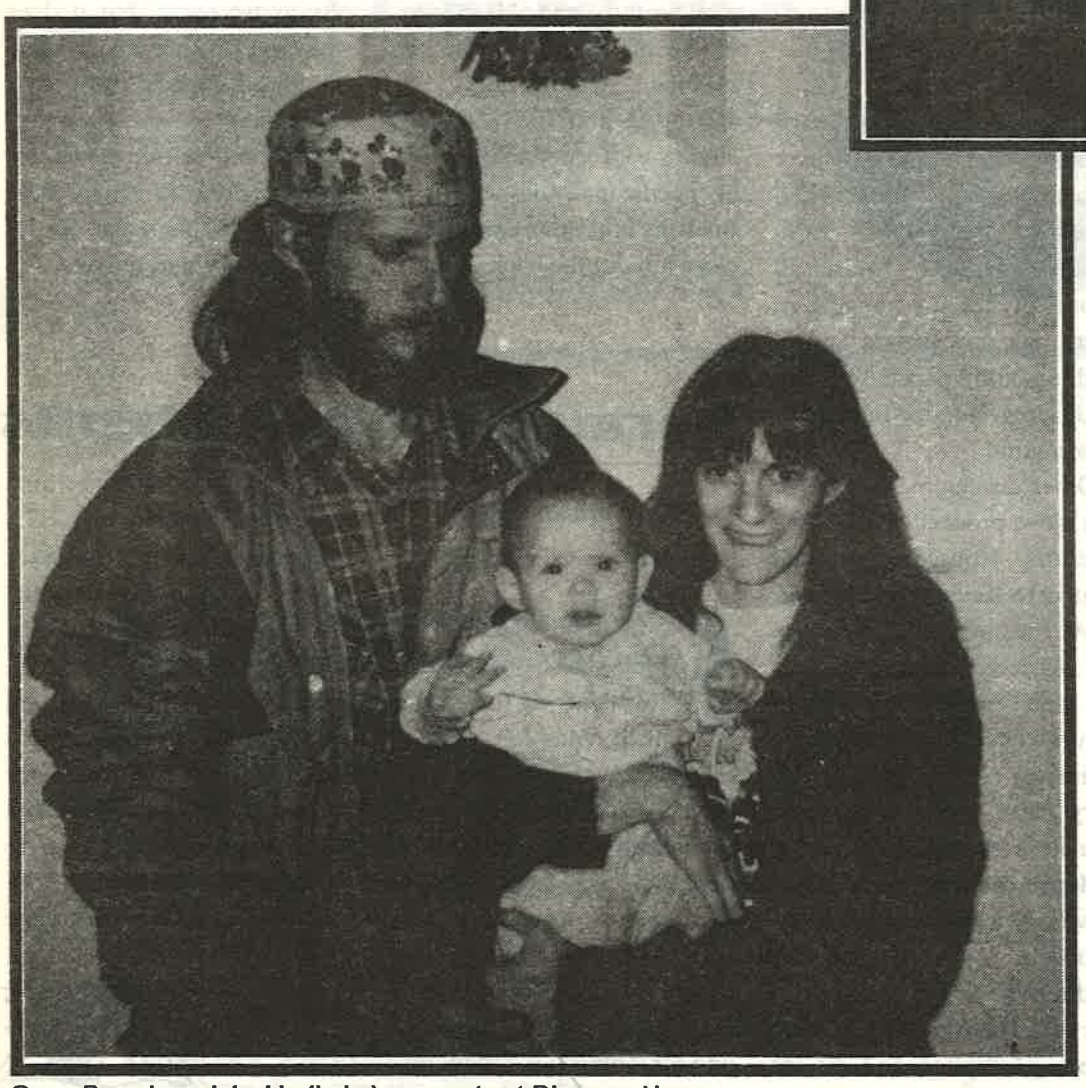
from the Des Moine

OUR MOST PROMINENT FORM OF hospitality is our meals. We serve lunch six days a week at Noon. We normally have ten or twelve people eat lunch with us each day. We also serve an evening meal at 6:00 p.m., seven days a week. Depending on the weather and other factors there can be as few as fifteen people or as many as forty. But that is not all we do.

— All photos by Joanne Kennedy

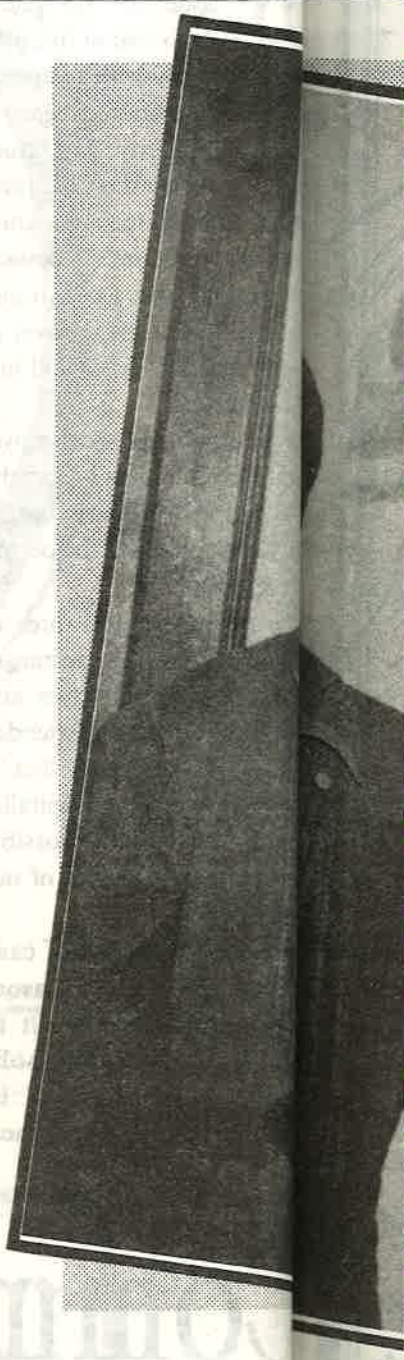
WE ALSO PROVIDE TEMPORARY housing for families. There are very few housing resources in Des Moines for men and women with children who are homeless, and even less for single fathers. We use the three large bedrooms upstairs in Dingman House for our guests, and we are generally full. The average stay with us is three to five weeks, and, of course, it's hospitality so there is no fee.

Tara and Nicole — teenage girls, they and their parents are guests at Dingman House



Greg, Beverly and Jackie (baby) — guests at Dingman House

Bertie — long-term guest — has with us upward of eight years



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Jim and Ray — long-time friends of the house — both live in the neighborhood and come by the Worker regularly, at least four times a week

John — waiting for dinner and a shower, he comes in at least four times a week and lives under a bridge somewhere

WHILE WE DO NOT OPERATE A FOOD pantry, as such, we do distribute a variety of food items and household goods. When someone comes to the door looking for canned food, bath soap or baby diapers we take a bag down to our basement and give them what we have on our shelves. We are supported entirely by donations so whatever we have has come in from something like a food drive. Occasionally the shelves run a bit bare, but our friends know that we give them all we can.

ANOTHER FORM OF HOSpitality is our open door policy during the day. Between the hours of 8am-10pm folks can come in and take a shower, use the phone, check their mail, get a drink or read through the newspaper. This is important for creating an atmosphere of peace and kindness in a world that is so consumed with fear and hatred. We also enjoy the company of many of the younger people who live in the neighborhood, once school gets out for the day.

Jordan and Nora hanging out together

and Joanne — in the kitchan at Dingman after dinner. Maria, seven pregnant with twins, speaks no English and works over 40 hours a at a local hotel. She is staying with us until she has the resources to home to Texas.

AS A RESPITE FROM LONG WEEKS and to refresh our spirits we celebrate Liturgy once a week on Friday nights at 7:30pm. It is a great way to be part of our Catholic Worker community, even if you are not Catholic. It gives us a chance to see our friends and supporters once a week and just be together.

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Norman's Whereabouts

Continued from page 1

But, I was a minor, and they wouldn't let me eat there. Now, if you've ever been to Times Square you know there are fast food places that never close. I would sit outside their doors and wait for people to throw away the food they didn't want. I'd take my pocket knife and trim the sandwiches, and then eat them.

The next thing to do was to find a place to sleep. There weren't too many shelters for kids, but since I had a bus ticket I could sometimes sleep in the Port Authority Bus Station, or downstairs in the subway. If there were too many people around I would go to a rooftop or find an alley.

If I was really lucky I could stay at Covenant House. But, I never wanted to let them know who I was or where I was from. No matter where I went I would always come back home. I missed a lot of school, but I still got my diploma, three years after my real class graduated.

Now, I'm not advocating that living on the streets is good, or that people should run away. The streets are different now than they were then. They are much more dangerous now. I want parents to spend more time with their kids and kids to spend more time with their parents and grandparents. Also, people can offer hospitality to kids or young couples that are having a difficult time. Well, that's all for now. Thank you.

DMCW Holiday Wish List 1994

Bills Paid ❖ Freezer ❖ Diapers ❖ Cleaning Supplies ❖ Toilet Paper ❖ Trash Bags ❖ Toothpaste/brush ❖ Shampoo ❖ Razors ❖ Shaving Cream ❖ Bags of Rice ❖ Beans and Pasta ❖ Coffee ❖ Blankets ❖ Queen Size Bedding ❖ Bookshelves ❖ Prayers

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